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MR. KAMPS: My name is Kevin Kamps. I work for a nuclear information and resource service in Washington, D.C. as a nuclear waste specialist. NIRS is an organization on nuclear power and radioactive waste issues and serves as a clearing house for information to grass roots communities and concerned citizens across the country. We have members in all fifty states, including many in Nevada.

The last time I was in Las Vegas, I had arrived on foot from New York City. 300 of us had walked 3,500 miles over the course of nine months on the walk across America for mother earth. We passed through more than a dozen states speaking face-to-face with tens of thousands of people. Our destination was the Nevada Test Site. And our goal was ending nuclear weapons testing once and for all. The vast majority of those we met with along the way agreed with us. We also told people that the Federal Government was targeting Yucca Mountain as the national high-level radioactive waste dump. Folks were very concerned to learn that they lived on waste transport routes that would see many thousands of shipments pass by.

1 When the earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale struck Yucca Mountain in June of 1992, we were sure that DOE would disqualify the site. Talk about a sign from above. The DOE's own field office was even damaged, but DOE has refused to disqualify the site despite mounting evidence that Yucca Mountain was not suitable.

2 Not only earthquakes, but fast flowing water, crustal expansion, escape pathways for radioactive gases and the possible presence of a magma pocket all plague the site. Most significant of all is the underground aquifer which will carry harmful doses of leaking radiation to human communities downstream for hundreds of thousands of years into the future.

3 Rather than disqualify the site as over 200 environmental organizations called for more than a year ago, DOE has changed the rules in the middle of the game, lowering the standards so low that Yucca Mountain can still qualify. That's politics and money, not science, and it's certainly not moral nor honest. DOE's recent move to change the site selection guidelines seems to be in bad faith. Announced just before the holidays, the public comment deadline falls five short days after the deadline for this present DEIS. The wastes are deadly for hundreds or thousands of years, so why such a rush to change the guidelines so quickly? To eliminate individual disqualifiers seems a desperate move. Is the site so unsuitable? DOE would be well advised to simply withdraw this unacceptable guidelines change.

4 We don't have the word "stupid" written on our foreheads. That's what Verna Lawrence, mayor of the tiny town of Sioux Ste. Marie, Michigan said when she learned that DOE planned to transport a small, one-time shipment of experimental plutonium fuel through there to Canada. The opposition of concerned citizens and Native American communities has included vows of non-violently blocking the shipment. The shipment has been delayed for years now and opposition is only growing in strength.

Wait till communities in forty-three states across the country learn that trains and trucks carrying not a few ounces, but hundreds of pounds of plutonium are headed their way. Each large rail cask will carry the long-lived radiation equivalent of 240 Hiroshima atomic bombs. Each truck cask, forty Hiroshima atomic bombs. And these are not one-time shipments, but thousands, perhaps tens of thousands. That's a grand total of over two million Hiroshima atomic bombs worth of long-lived radioactivity. Every single one of those shipments would roll into Nevada, a state without nuclear reactors.

DOE studies of shown that release of even a small fraction of the deadly contents of a high-level nuclear waste cask could cause an unprecedented environmental catastrophe. Emergency responders and people living downwind are on the frontline for health damage. That's why we call these transports mobile Chernobyls named after the nuclear catastrophe of 1986.

5 | Despite the importance of this issue to communities across the country, DOE has tried to downplay the transport issue during this DEIS process. Large cities along major transport routes were excluded from the initial list of hearing sites. St. Louis was added only after citizen pressure. Chicago, Indiana and Ohio were stubbornly excluded by DOE for months, despite citizen's requests for hearings.

Just six days ago on January 5th, DOE announced three new hearings, in Lincoln, Nebraska, Chicago and Cleveland, Ohio. Lincoln has had all of nineteen days notice to prepare for a hearing. Oddly, officials at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission seemed to know about these hearings in early December. They mention them at a public meeting. Yet DOE refused to confirm this until this last minute announcement. Given such short notice, DOE should extend its public comment deadline to give citizens who participate in these last minute hearings adequate time to submit more in- depth comments.

MR. LAWSON: Thirty seconds, please.

6 | MR. KAMPS: | The example of Germany should serve as a warning about what happens when the public is locked out of the decision-making process. The numbers from March of 1997 tell the story. Just six nuclear waste casks, nearly 200 people injured, 500 arrested, 20,000 protesters, 30,000 police, one hundred million dollars. Interestingly, another cross-country peace march is about to begin, and one of the message that they're carrying to the people of America is that Yucca Mountain is still targeted as a nuclear waste dump. The question I'd like them to ask people is: Should we change the American flag to have just forty-nine stars and one radiation symbol for Nevada? I thought our pledge of allegiance says: "One nation under God with liberty and justice for all." Not when nuclear wastes are involved, I guess. Thank you. |